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ABSTRACT

Literacy practices of one of the fastest growing ethnic minorities in the United States, Korean Americans, were explored. A two-part study of the Korean and English literacy patterns was conducted in two communities, an ethnic enclave called Midbrae and an ethnically integrated area called Hill Heights. The first part was a year-long ethnographic study of the two cities, and the second was a telephone interview study involving a sample of Korean-American adults from each community (52 from Midbrae and 30 from Hill Heights). It was concluded that literacy practices vary in the two communities. In Hill Heights, Korean Americans used English in order to participate in the society around them. In contrast, in Midbrae, adult Korean Americans had fewer opportunities to use English outside their homes and many opportunities to use Korean. When they did use English, they used it with non-native speakers. These Korean Americans may maintain their Korean literacy practices, but they are at risk of never acquiring native-like English ones. (Contains 8 tables and 33 references.) (Author/SLD)

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LITERACY PRACTICES IN TWO KOREAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Literacy Practices in Two Korean-American Communities

Abstract

In this report, we explore the literacy practices of one of the fastest growing ethnic minority groups in the United States: Korean Americans. We report on a two-part study of the Korean and English literacy patterns found in two different communities: an ethnic enclave called Midbrae and an ethnically integrated area called Hill Heights. The first part was a yearlong ethnographic study of the two cities; the second was a telephone interview study involving a sample of Korean-American adults from each community. We conclude that literacy practices vary in the two cities. In Hill Heights, adult Korean Americans use English in order to participate in the society around them. In contrast, in Midbrae, adult Korean Americans have fewer opportunities to use English outside of their homes and many opportunities to use Korean. When they do use English, they often use it with non-native speakers. These Korean Americans may maintain their Korean literacy practices, but they are at risk of never acquiring native-like English ones.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a partial report of a three-year longitudinal study of the literacy patterns of Korean-American children. The objective of this study is to examine the contexts in which these children use Korean and English in their homes and the purposes for which they use literacy in the contexts identified. The first year of the project was devoted to examining the communities in which the children acquire literacy skills. This report summarizes research from the first year of the study.

Language use in bilingual speech communities has become the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry. (For reviews of the research, refer to Appel & Muysken, 1987; Dorian, 1981, 1982, 1988; Grosjean, 1982; and Hakuta, 1986; for discussions of first language attrition among bilinguals, see also Seliger & Vago, 1991.) Most of the studies on this topic have focused on explanations of language use. Various external factors cited as significant include numerical strength of the group in relation to other minorities and majorities, social class, educational background, settlement patterns, ties with the homeland, degree of similarity between the minority and majority language, extent of exogamous marriage, attitudes of majority and minority, and government policy toward the language and education of minorities. (For a more complete listing of the factors affecting language use in bilingual communities, refer to Conklin & Lourie, 1983; Grosjean, 1982; Romaine, 1989; and Veltman, 1983.)

However, investigators of language use have concerned themselves primarily with spoken rather than written language. Although some researchers have examined the literacy abilities of bilinguals (McLaughlin, 1987; Segalowitz, 1986), only recently have a number of researchers studied the specific contexts in which individuals attempt to become literate in the diverse ethnic communities in which they live. Many have followed Heath's (1983) classic ethnographic study of language use in monolingual communities. Her investigation demonstrates the importance of families and communities in shaping the ways in which children learn to use literacy in home and school settings.

Like Heath, Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith (1984) used an ethnographic perspective when studying literacy uses in three different communities: a "group of educated, school oriented parents and their preschool-aged children from a Philadelphia suburb, a family in a traditionally nonliterate society in Papua New Guinea, and a number of Chinese families who left Vietnam and recently settled in Philadelphia" (p. 4). Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith argue that the three groups had very different types of literacy and placed different values on them. The children in the Philadelphia suburbs used print in their everyday social transactions with peers and adults to acquire information, solve problems, and acquire knowledge. Children were read to frequently and they were encouraged to look at books independently. In the Sino-Vietnamese families, on the other hand, the families viewed the acquisition of English literacy as a priority, but the daily activities of preschool children were not organized around books or a general interest in print. Although the parents were literate in Chinese, they did not read to their children in Chinese, and their children made little progress in acquiring Chinese literacy. Even greater literacy differences were found in the family from Papua New Guinea. These children, from a traditionally nonliterate society, had oral traditions that were developed through interactions with their peers, as well as with family members. Parents did not focus on extending their children's abilities to acquire information and analyze it or to use language for problem-solving purposes.

In a similar type of study, Trueba (1984) explored the ways in which texts were used by 27 lower-class Hispanic children in their homes. He suggested that although the children participated in literacy activities, these activities did not prepare them for school activities in which they were asked to use literate thinking—to analyze, critically read and evaluate, and write reflectively. He also found that the children did little reading for personal enjoyment.

Investigators of literacy use in bilingual communities have often been criticized on both methodological and ideological grounds. For instance, in

analyzing literacy, most of the researchers overlooked the importance of content. As Wallace (1988) points out, "Written texts must not just have a general function—to warn, inform, persuade or entertain; they must be about something, they must have a content" (p. 13). It is not enough to describe how children use literacy, researchers must also examine the content of the literacy forms used, the reaction of family and community members to the content, and the manner in which various literacy forms are used in homes and communities. (See also Stuckey, 1991.) A different set of criticisms is ideological and is made against those who suggest that language minority children fail in school because they have not yet become literate in English. Investigators who make such suggestions fail to take into account the multitude of social, psychological, and economic variables that affect an individual's success or failure acquiring the literacy practices of mainstream school settings. (For an excellent review of the criticism, refer to McKay, 1993; see also Mercado, 1991.)

Despite these criticisms, the ethnographers cited above have furthered our knowledge of literacy practices in bilingual communities. However, none has examined the literacy practices of Korean Americans. Several investigators have, nonetheless, contributed related studies of interest.

Using census statistics, immigration statistics, and assumed rates of natural increase, Yu (1982) estimates that Korean Americans in Southern California between ages 20 and 39 constitute 63% of the total immigrants. He also reports that the Korean-American population of Southern California is overrepresented in the reproductive and younger ages. Current literature on age differences in second language development suggests that, in general, younger Korean Americans would become more proficient in English than older ones. (For a summary of the research, see, e.g., Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1992.)

In the most extensive study, Huhr and Kim (1984) report that Korean Americans from Chicago and Los Angeles have no desire to discard their language or culture yet have a positive orientation toward American culture. Korean Americans want their children to learn English and to succeed in American schools.

Like Hurh and Kim, Kim (1988) suggests that Korean Americans may learn English only for functional purposes (e.g., to get a better job, to be able to negotiate the government bureaucracy) while retaining Korean for all or nearly all social purposes. Kim argues that Korean-American parents very much want their children to retain full use of Korean as the language of social interaction in the Korean-American home and community. Kim explains:

> Since they are relatively recent immigrants, their English proficiency level is low, while their unfamiliarity with American social structures and their discomfort in functioning in American society are high. Financially, the different job market and job requirements in the United States make the transfer of Korean education and work experience to the American situation difficult and uncertain. (p. 257)

In a more recent study, the KSCI-TV research bureau collected information about Korean Americans in the United States through a Gallup opinion poll. Eighty-four percent of the Korean respondents over 18 reported that "their main language in daily life is Korean" ("Patterns Among," 1992).

To investigate the literacy practices of Korean Americans in the United States, this study focuses on the Korean-American populations of two cities: Midbrae, an ethnic enclave, and Hill Heights, an ethnically integrated area.[1] These two cities, though separated by only 15 miles, vary sharply. The Korean-American community of Midbrae is a lower-middle- to middle-class working community heavily concentrated in an ethnic enclave in Koreatown, whereas the Korean-American community of Hill Heights is upper middle class and is largely interspersed throughout a suburban area. Korean Americans enter Midbrae and Hill Heights with significant differences in lifestyle and resources, and the differences in the access they have to native English speakers may be just as significant. Differences in contact with native English speakers may result in varying language acquisition contexts, which in turn lead to differences in the extent to which literacy skills are maintained, developed, or lost.

Although it has long been assumed that language contact affects literacy use in bilingual communities, no systematic comparison has been undertaken of the literacy practices of ethnic groups that experience different types of contact with native English speakers. Thus, no precise statement of the relationship between language contact and literacy has ever been articulated. As a result, researchers sometimes proceed as if the literacy practices of an ethnic group in an ethnic enclave were interchangeable with the literacy practices of members of the same ethnic group in an ethnically integrated area, and as if literacy data obtained from an ethnic enclave were the same as literacy data obtained from an ethnically integrated area.

One interesting way to approach the topic of language contact and literacy is through an examination of the literacy patterns of two populations: one which has little contact with native English speakers and the other which has considerable contact with them. The present two-part study takes this approach.

Before turning to the study, it will be useful to define our use of the term *literacy*. In our view, literacy entails knowing not only the skills associated with the ability to understand the printed word, but also the range of practices associated with the printed word and the social uses of these practices. Because, in this perspective, literacy is affected by the historical, economic, political, and sociocultural context in which individuals live, it must be viewed in terms of its use and value in communities. Different communities practice different literacies (Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984), and these literacies develop out of and interact with spoken uses of language within these communities. This perspective of literacy is a broad one. It takes into consideration the plurality of literacies, acknowledges that literate practices involve not only the use of print but the social interaction associated with the use of print, and affirms the critical importance of investigating the wider context in which literacy practices are embedded.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TWO-PART STUDY

We examined literacy practices in two Korean-American communities through two means: (1) a yearlong ethnographic study of the two cities and (2) a telephone interview investigation involving a sample of Korean-American adults from each city.

Part I: Ethnographic Study of the Two Cities

Ethnographic data were collected over the course of a year in a variety of ways, including participation in local churches and focus groups and in-depth interviews with city officials, librarians, school administrators, ministers, local Korean-American researchers, teachers, and students. Interviews were audiotaped, and observations were recorded in journals. In addition, samples of literacy materials available in Midbrae and Hill Heights were collected from libraries, bookstores, shops, newsstands, homes, schools, and churches. Both of the researchers conducting this study live in the Hill Heights area. One is a Korean American who attends a local Korean-American church in Hill Heights. The other is Anglo American.

MIDBRAE

Within Midbrae, Korean Americans are highly concentrated in the downtown area, which is referred to throughout the community as Koreatown. The Los Angeles riots of April 29, 1992 resulted in the move of many Korean Americans from Los Angeles Koreatown to Midbrae Koreatown. The commercial, civic, cultural, and religious activities in Midbrae are largely controlled by and reflect ideals of Korean-speaking, Korean-oriented, first generation immigrants. Midbrae Korean Americans are surrounded by Korean-American nursery schools, shops, restaurants, banks, and stores. Korean signs line the streets, and Korean is heard throughout the city. The 1992-1993 *Korean Business Directory* (issued by the *Korea Times Los Angeles*) lists 23 Korean-American churches. All offer services in Korean. Traditional Korean holidays are celebrated in Midbrae along with U.S holidays.

Midbrae is occupied by other large populations of recent immigrants. It is bordered on one side by a Vietnamese-American ethnic enclave which spills into it. Large populations of Chinese Americans, Filipinos, Hispanics, and European Americans also live in Midbrae. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Asians in Midbrae constitute 12% of the population (12,262). There are 5702 Korean Americans, 2319 Vietnamese Americans, 2056 Chinese Americans, and 2185 Filipinos. Hispanics constitute 12% of the population (12,752) and European Americans constitute 76% (78,182).

Because of their life circumstances, many adult Korean Americans in Midbrae speak either Korean or a variety of immigrant English, known throughout the city as "Konglish." While they have limited access to monolingual English speakers, Midbrae Korean Americans have ample opportunity to interact with immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Mexico. When speaking to these non-native speakers of English, Konglish serves them as a lingua franca.

Midbrae Korean Americans use Korean on a daily basis in informal situations in their homes as well as in more formal situations, such as for religious practice, business transactions, and entertainment. They are surrounded by Korean print. It is easy for them to obtain printed material in Korean from bookstores and corner newsstands. Korean videos can readily be rented from local video stores.

Hill Heights

Like Midbrae, Hills Heights lies amid other residential communities and is not made up of just one group of people. It is a rapidly growing, multi-ethnic community. However, unlike Midbrae, in Hill Heights, people of different nationalities live in close proximity; the city is not divided by ethnic regions. In Hill Heights, Korean is not heard on the streets. There are no Korean restaurants, daycare centers, shops, or banks. Of the eight Korean-American churches in Hill Heights, only two offer services in Korean.

According to the 1990 Census, Asians in Hill Heights constitute 14% of the population (14,035). There are 3660 Korean Americans, 2319 Vietnamese Americans, 6482 Chinese Americans, and 1574 Filipinos. Hispanics constitute 6% of the population (6408), and European Americans constitute 79% (79,021).

Unlike Korean Americans in Midbrae, Korean Americans in Hill Heights find that they must use English in order to carry out their daily activities and to participate in the society that surrounds them. In Hill Heights, the Korean-American community is not large enough to support its own shops and services, so adults must go to Midbrae in order to communicate in Korean with others in daycare programs, grocery stores, neighborhood libraries, and recreational programs. Contexts for Korean literacy that extend beyond the family and church are very limited in Hill Heights.

Through the ethnographic study, we attempted to make reliable estimates of the literacy patterns of Korean Americans in Midbrae and Hill Heights. In doing so, we argued that Korean Americans who live in two geographically close Korean-American communities have different amounts of exposure to English and Korean, which may affect their literacy patterns. Three main observations from our study are summarized below:

1. Because many of the Midbrae Korean Americans are recent arrivals to the United States, they have relatively less access to native English speakers than Hill Heights Korean Americans. They report using a variety of immigrant English (which they call "Konglish") to communicate with immigrants who do not speak Korean.

2. Hill Heights Korean Americans have greater access to native English speakers. Outside of their homes, most Hill Heights Korean Americans use English rather than Korean.

3. Midbrae Korean Americans are often exposed to Korean reading materials; Korean appears on street signs throughout the city,

and Korean Americans are able to purchase Korean reading materials easily from corner newsstands and local book stores.

Limitations

The exploratory nature of this research needs to be underscored. The study presented here does not show that language contact predicts literacy use; it merely suggests that language contact is one of the factors associated with literacy. The data also indicate that other variables, particularly socioeconomic ones, probably affect literacy. Those living in Midbrae may have fewer resources to purchase reading materials, either in English or Korean, and less time to read these materials.

In addition, it is important to point out the difficulties involved in using ethnographic data on language use. Detailed information concerning language use must be obtained from a different kind of study. Microanalysis of longitudinal data set in broad descriptions of specific Korean-American communities will provide more detailed answers to questions concerning language contact and literacy. While at the macro level, ethnographic studies make it possible to make broad generalizations about a group's literacy behaviors, these generalizations are not always accurate. This is because various factors that affect literacy use change throughout an individual's life.[2]

Finally, different findings might result from a more objective, quantitative investigation of the literacy practices of the Korean Americans in each city. To test this possibility, we undertook the interview study described below.

Part II: Telephone Interview Study

Like the ethnographic study, the telephone interview study focused on home and community literacy.

Method

A total of 82 30-minute interviews were completed. The random sample consisted of 52 Korean Americans from Midbrae and 30 Korean Americans from Hill Heights.[3]

Subjects. All Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents were Korean-born adults. The mean age of the Midbrae respondents was 44 years, their mean length of residence in the United States was 8 years, and they had arrived in the United States at the mean age of 36 years. Of the Midbrae respondents, 38 were males and 14 were females.

The mean age of the Hill Heights respondents was 44 years, their mean length of residence in the United States was 15 years, and they had arrived in the United States at the mean age of 32 years. Of the Hill Heights respondents, 15 were males and 15 were females.

Income levels of Korean Americans in Midbrae and Hill Heights varied sharply. The median total family yearly income of the Midbrae respondents was $32,000, whereas the median total family yearly income of the Hill Heights respondents was $79,000. Only 1% of the Midbrae respondents reported incomes of $75,000 and above, but almost half of the Hill Heights respondents reported such incomes. A strong indicator of income level is home ownership. Among Midbrae residents, home and condomium owners constituted 46% (24/52), and home and apartment renters constituted 54% (28/52). However, among Hill Heights residents, home and condominimum owners predominated at 70% (21/30). Apartment renters constituted 30% (9/30). Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the two groups.

Table 1: Summary of Subject Characteristics

Characteristics	Midbrae	Hill Heights
Number in sample	52	30
Age		
Mean	44.0	43.9
Standard Deviation	10.8	8.4
Length of U.S. residence		
Mean	8.0	15.2
Standard Deviation	4.5	15.5
Gender		
Females	14	15
Males	38	15
Median income level	$32,000	$79,000

Procedure. After a two-hour training session, five bilingual Korean Americans interviewed the respondents during a two-week period.[4] Respondents were told that the interviews could be conducted in either English or Korean, whichever they felt most comfortable using. All respondents chose to use Korean.[5]

Following Yu (1982), we used the Kim random sample with replacement technique. The main assumption underlying this technique is that the Kim family name is a representative sample of the total Korean population. Yu (1982) provides two arguments to support this assumption. First, Kims constitute a significant proportion (22%) of the Korean population. Second, Kim is a typically Korean surname; it is found among no other nationalities. For instance, from the latest *Orange County Pacific Bell Telephone Directory,* not one Kim has other than a Korean or American first name. In addition, all Kims seem to spell their name K-I-M. Thus, telephone directories provide an up-to-date sampling framework for examining the Korean-American population in a local area with significant Korean-American concentration. The Orange County telephone directory for 1992 - 1993 contained 1366 Kims. Of these, 242 were from Midbrae and 105 from Hill Heights. The sampling technique involved compiling an alphabetical list of Kims from Midbrae and Hill Heights from the directory. Deleted from this list were Kims listed as businesses and Kims located on streets adjacent to a local university. Lists of every fifth Kim were then compiled and split in such a way that all interviewers called approximately equal numbers of Hill Heights and Midbrae Kims in random orders. A total of 105 Kims were contacted. The overall response rate—that is, the percentage of the sample that agreed to be interviewed—was 78% (82/105).

Instrument. The questionnaire used to conduct the interviews contained 38 items: 23 pertaining to literacy patterns and 15 pertaining to personal characteristics of the respondents. We defined literacy patterns not in terms of the acts of reading and writing, but in a broader sense, as behaviors associated with "the ability to think and reason like a literate person in a specific society" (Langer, 1991, p.11). Because previous research suggests that speaking and listening are relevant to literate ways of thinking, we included items related to speaking and listening as well as items related to reading and writing. Items pertaining to the personal characteristics of the respondents focused on length of residence in the United States, age upon arrival, educational background, and income level.[6] The interview instrument was constructed in Korean (and translated into English) because of our expectation that Korean would be the preferred language of the respondents. Ambiguous items were deleted through pilot testing. The questionnaire was then subjected to tests of reliability. (See Yoon & Scarcella, in press.) All of the items directly related to language preference and literacy in the home and the community were analyzed.

Analysis. Frequencies for each item of the questionnaire that could be tallied were calculated and compared. In examining differences between the percentages of Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents' use of literacy practices, Chi-square tests were used. For items that involved 5-point likert scales, Mann-Whitney U tests were used to examine differences between the Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents' rankings. For the Chi-square tests, the level of significance was set at .01 (two-tailed).[7] For the Mann-Whitney U tests, the level of significance was set at .05 (two-tailed).

Results and Discussion

An analysis of the telephone interview data indicates that the majority of the Korean-American adults from Midbrae and Hill Heights use Korean with each other and with their children. As shown in Table 2, all Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents reported speaking Korean to their spouses. Ninety-two percent (48/52) of the Midbrae respondents and 76% (22/29) of the Hill Heights respondents reported using Korean with their children.[8] This does not mean that English is not spoken in Korean-American homes in Midbrae and Hill Heights. Although Table 3 indicates that only a small percentage of the Korean Americans in Midbrae and Hill Heights (one

in each group) reported speaking English to their spouses, 15% (8/52) of the Midbrae respondents and 48% (14/29) of the Hill Heights respondents reported using English with their children.[9] This difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 22.69$, $p = .0001$).

Table 2: Korean Language Preferences In the Home

Question	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	p
Do you use Korean when speaking to your spouse?	100%	100%	--	--
Do you use Korean when speaking to your children?	92%	76%	3.37	n.s.d.

Table 3: English Language Preferences In the Home

Question	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	p
Do you use English when speaking to your spouse?	2%	3%	--	--
Do you use English when speaking to your children?	15%	48%	22.69	.0001

In general, more Midbrae respondents than Hill Heights respondents reported that they have Korean reading materials in their homes.[10] (See Table 4.) Seventy-nine percent (33/42) of the Midbrae respondents and 52% (12/23) of the Hill Heights respondents reported keeping Korean magazines at home ($\chi^2 = 14.02$, $p < .0005$). Whereas 87% (41/47) of the Midbrae respondents reported having Korean newspapers in their homes, only 48% (12/25) of the Hill Heights respondents reported having them. This difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 31.69$, $p = .0001$). The majority of the Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents reported keeping Korean novels and children's books in their homes; however, differences between groups were not statistically significant. Midbrae respondents reported keeping more Korean academic books in their homes than Hill Heights respondents. While 37% (15/41) of the Midbrae respondents reported having Korean academic books, only 23% (6/26) of the Hill Heights respondents reported having this type of reading material. This difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 8.33$, $p < .005$). Although the majority of both Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents reported keeping Korean religious materials in their homes, relatively few of the respondents from either city kept Korean encyclopedias in their homes.

Both Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents also reported keeping a variety of English reading materials in their homes. However, there were no significant differences in the number of respondents from Midbrae and Hill Heights who reported keeping English magazines, newspapers, novels, children's books, or academic books in their homes (see Table 5). Only the number of Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents reporting English encyclopedias in their homes varied significantly. Sixty-three percent (24/38) of the Midbrae respondents and 95% (20/21) of the Hill Heights respondents reported keeping this reading material ($\chi^2 = 10.78$, $p = .001$).

Table 4: Korean Reading Materials Kept In Homes

Question: Which of these Korean reading materials do you keep in your home?

Type of Reading Material	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	p
Magazines	79%	52%	14.02	<.0005
Newspapers	87%	48%	31.69	.0001
Novels	83%	86%	.11	n.s.d.
Children's Books	81%	71%	1.41	n.s.d.
Academic Books	37%	23%	8.33	<.005
Religious Material	98%	100%	.04	n.s.d.
Encyclopedias	37%	38%	.03	n.s.d.

Table 5: English Reading Materials Kept in Homes

Question: Which of these English reading materials do you keep in your home?

Type of Reading Material	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	p
Magazines	64%	65%	.03	n.s.d.
Newspapers	32%	40%	1.60	n.s.d.
Novels	41%	45%	.36	n.s.d.
Children's Books	84%	94%	1.06	n.s.d.
Academic Books	92%	95%	.11	n.s.d.
Encyclopedias	63%	95%	10.78	.001

We also measured literacy use, in part, by Korean and English television viewing. This is because previous research suggests that television, whether in English or Korean, provides models and occasions for interaction that lead to literacy, since vocabulary, formulaic language, and grammar can be learned from television shows (Heath, 1986). All respondents have access to Korean language television programs and many reported that they spend time watching these programs. While 46% (24/52) of the Midbrae respondents reported that they view these programs on a daily basis, only 23% (7/30) of the Hill Heights respondents reported viewing Korean language programs daily. The difference between the Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents' responses was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 15.39$, $p = .0001$).

Newspaper reading is also a measure of literacy. Seventy-one percent (37/52) of the Midbrae respondents and 37% (11/30) of the Hill Heights respondents reported that they read Korean newspapers daily. This difference was significant ($\chi^2 = 31.24$, $p = .0001$).

Community literacy use was measured by an analysis of the languages the respondents reported using in church, the grocery store, the bank, the doctor's office, alumni centers, and at work. We also measured it through an analysis of the language preferences of the respondents' children. Both Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents observe that contexts for Korean literacy use extend beyond the family and immediate community into other social settings, which provide educational, medical, religious, and recreational services. Such settings include church groups, sports programs, and college alumni associations. In these settings, Korean literacy skills are used in ways that differ from the ways in which they are used in homes.

Data concerning the languages spoken in Midbrae and Hill Heights community settings are summarized in Tables 6 and 7.[11] In general, more Midbrae than Hill Heights respondents reported using Korean in these settings. All of the Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents who attended church reported using Korean there. All of the Midbrae respondents and 96% (27/28) of the Hill Heights respondents reported using Korean at the grocery store. Sixty-four percent (32/50) of the Midbrae respondents and 27% (8/30) of the Hill Heights respondents reported using Korean in banks. This difference was significant ($\chi^2 = 50.70$, $p = .0001$). While 90% (45/50) of the Midbrae respondents reported speaking Korean at the doctor's office, 76% (22/29) of the Hill Heights respondents reported speaking Korean there. This difference was not significant. Almost all of those who reported attending Korean college alumni clubs—97% (30/31 of the combined Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents)—reported using only Korean at these clubs.

Midbrae respondents reported using less English in their community than Hill Heights residents (see Table 7). For instance, only 20% (10/50) of the Midbrae respondents reported using English at both the bank and the doctor's office. In contrast, 48% (14/29) of the Hill Heights respondents reported using English in these two places. Differences between groups were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 16.33$, $p = .0001$).

Table 6: Respondents' Language Preferences in the Community

Question: Do you use Korean in the following places?

Places in the Community	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	*p*
Church	100%	100%	--	n.s.d.
Grocery Store	100%	96%	.18	n.s.d.
Bank	64%	27%	50.70	.0001
Doctor's Office	90%	76%	2.58	n.s.d.
Alumni Club	100%	99%	--	n.s.d.

Table 7: Respondents' English Language Preferences in the Community

Question: Do you use English in the following places?

Places in the Community	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	*p*
Church	--	--	--	n.s.d.
Grocery Store	84%	100%	2.56	n.s.d.
Bank	20%	48%	16.33	.0001
Doctor's Office	20%	48%	16.33	.0001
Alumni Club	--	1%	--	n.s.d.

At work, the Midbrae respondents reported a greater use of Korean than Hill Heights respondents. This difference was significant (z, corrected for ties = -4.83, $p < .0001$). The data also indicate that whereas 46% (22/48) of the Midbrae respondents reported that they always speak Korean at work, only 14% (4/29) of the Hill Heights respondents reported that they always speak Korean at work. Sixty-two percent (18/29) of the Hill Heights respondents reported that they never use Korean at work (see Table 8).

Also shown in Table 8, Hill Heights respondents reported greater use of English at work than Midbrae respondents (z, corrected for ties = -2.45, $p < .001$). It should also be noted that while all of the Hill Heights respondents reported that they speak English at work always or often, only 58% (28/48) of the Midbrae respondents reported that they speak English at work always or often. Twenty-seven percent (13/48) of the Midbrae respondents reported that they rarely or never use English at work.

Table 8: Respondents' Language Preferences at Work

Question	Midbrae	Hill Heights
How often do you use Korean at work?[1]		
Always	46%	14%
Often	25%	14%
Once in a while	0%	10%
Rarely	12%	0%
Never	17%	62%
How often do you use English at work?[2]		
Always	39%	66%
Often	19%	34%
Once in a while	15%	0%
Rarely	15%	0%
Never	12%	0%

[1]Difference statistically significant, Mann-Whitney U, z corrected for ties = -4.83, $p < .0001$

[2]Difference statistically significant, Mann-Whitney U, z corrected for ties = -2.45, $p < .001$

From what children learn in the community, they acquire mental pictures of the status of the Korean and English languages. They learn how these two languages help them to get along in life. Both Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents reported that their children use Korean outside of their homes. There were no significant differences between the children's language preferences reported by the Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents (see Tables 9 and 10). However, as shown in Table 9, the respondents reported that the main situation in which their children use Korean is religious (at church, bible studies, and fellowship meetings).

Table 9: Children's Language Preferences in the Community:

Question: Do your children use Korean in the following situations?

Situations	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	*p*
Religious Activities	41%	60%	6.02	<.05
Sports Activities	29%	10%	36.10	.0001
Music-Related Activities	--	1%	--	--
Other--School Related Activities	13%	--	--	--

Table 10: Children's English Language Preferences in the Community

Question: Do your children use English in the following situations?

Situations	Midbrae	Hill Heights	χ^2	*p*
Religious Activities	31%	44%	6.02	<.05
Sports Activities	86%	95%	.85	n.s.d.
Music-Related Activities	100%	92%	.70	n.s.d.
Other--School Related Activities	100%	87%	1.94	n.s.d.

Major findings of the telephone interviews are summarized here:

1. In Midbrae, Korean is reportedly used by Korean-American adults in a greater variety of situations than it is in Hill Heights.

2. With the exception of the home and church, Korean-American respondents in both Midbrae and Hill Heights reported that their children use mainly English.

3. Midbrae Korean Americans reported that they have a greater variety of Korean reading materials in their homes than Hill Heights Korean Americans.

Information gathered from the telephone interviews was used to provide a detailed description of the literacy practices of Korean Americans in two cities. The interview data suggest that in both Midbrae and Hill Heights homes, adults, and to a considerably lesser extent, children, speak Korean. This finding is consistent with other studies, which have shown that many adult immigrants to the United States use their first language in the home, while their children use English (Wong Fillmore, 1991; see also Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992; Pease-Alvarez, 1993; and Veltman, 1983). The inability of immigrants to maintain their home as an intact domain for the use of their first language has often been decisive in language shift. Findings from the interview study related to reading materials suggest that more Korean Americans in Midbrae than Hill Heights have Korean magazines and newspapers in their homes. Perhaps Midbrae Korean Americans are less proficient in English reading and therefore prefer to read Korean magazines and newspapers. The Korean Americans whom we interviewed in Midbrae, and to a significantly lesser extent those in Hill Heights, reported that they frequently watch Korean television shows. This finding is consistent with that reported by Won-Doornink (1988). As Won-Doornink explains, "Koreans are avid [television] viewers in their former homeland and continue this behavior in the United States. Television seems to be an important part of their lives in their new surroundings, perhaps due to its familiarity and easy accessibility" (p. 89).

The analysis of language choice outside of the home indicates that Korean is frequently used by Midbrae respondents and, in two specific situations (the grocery store and church), by Hill Heights respondents as well. The finding that Korean is used in grocery stores by many Hill Heights respondents can probably be explained by the fact that most of the Hill Heights respondents like Korean food and shop in

both Hill Heights grocery stores and Midbrae Korean-American ones. The finding that Korean Americans often use Korean in their churches is consistent with other studies (see, e.g., Kim, 1980, 1988). It would appear that churches play a role in supporting the literacy of first generation immigrants since many written materials are used in churches. Ethnographic data help to explain the finding that Korean Americans from Midbrae, but few from Hill Heights, use Korean when they are at the bank. Only in Midbrae are banks owned and operated by Korean-speaking Korean Americans. The finding that Korean is the preferred language of the workplace of Korean Americans in Midbrae, but not in Hill Heights, might be explained by ethnographic data, which suggest that more Korean Americans in Midbrae than Hill Heights work in businesses that directly serve the Korean-American community.

Limitations

Despite the large differences in literacy patterns observed, several limitations of the interview study merit attention. Pease-Alvarez (1993) has discussed some of the problems in doing research on literacy in bilingual communities using interview questionnaire data. (See also Liebersen, 1969.) Such data are limited by time and money and do not allow the detailed analysis of many facets of literacy. On the other hand, such data enable researchers to obtain more knowledge about the ways in which speakers of large ethnic groups use language than would otherwise be possible in the course of a lifetime of study (Romaine, 1989).

Self-reports, such as the ones used in the interview study, are also subject to variance in relation to many factors. For instance, the frequency with which the respondents claimed to use Korean may have been exaggerated due to ethnic pride. A related criticism is that the interpretation of language use is subjective in this interview. Any person who could carry on a simple conversation in English on ordinary topics was probably considered by the respondents to be using English. It is also possible that some of the Korean-American respondents reported speaking fluent English when, in fact, speaking a variety of immigrant English.

Methodological limitations in the use of the Kim listings as a sampling framework are summarized by Yu (1982). These listings systematically eliminate Kims with unlisted telephone numbers or no telephones as well as Korean women married to members of other ethnic groups and Korean children adopted by American families. It should also be noted that it takes about six months for a newcomer's telephone number to become available in a telephone listing.

Like the ethnographic study, the telephone interview study does not show that language contact predicts literacy use; in fact, the data indicate that other variables such as socioeconomic level and length of residence in the United States might interact to affect language use. Recall that the Midbrae and Hill Heights residents differed significantly in terms of socioeconomic level and their length of residence in the United States.

CONCLUSION

As was suggested earlier, only a few studies of literacy in bilingual communities have been undertaken. Despite the preliminary nature of this research and the limitations of the investigation, several findings emerged. In the case of both Hill Heights and Midbrae, Korean Americans are under strong external pressure to learn English, the language of the society at large. However, they are also under internal pressure to keep their home language. In Hill Heights, though not in Midbrae, there are few contexts outside of the home in which Korean literacy skills are necessary. In Hill Heights, Korean Americans are pressured to acquire native-like English literacy skills, because they interact with native English speakers on a daily basis. In Hill Heights' predominantly native-English-speaking community, Korean Americans must use English.

Without extensive exposure to standard English literacy patterns through a variety of contexts, there are many features of English reading and

writing that will probably not be acquired by Korean Americans in Midbrae. Participation in schools that are attended largely by other recent arrivals to the United States may not be enough for Korean Americans to achieve mastery of some of the more complicated aspects of English grammar, such as subordination, causative structures, the verb tense system, modal auxiliaries, and articles. Imperfect learning of English, as well as the absence of contact with native English speakers, may contribute to the possible development of a new Korean-American dialect of English.

Most of the Korean Americans in Hill Heights must use English to participate in the many and varied activities of their communities. When they take their children to baseball practice, volunteer in their children's schools, and supervise their children's scouting activities, parents interact with native English speakers.[12] Midbrae Korean Americans, on the other hand, do not have much daily interaction with native English speakers. To the extent that they have limited access to a variety of social contexts where the use of English is conventional, they probably do not have the opportunity to master the varieties of English necessary for them to be able to function on par with native English speakers. Their opportunities to use a variety of registers are limited, and the lexicon and syntactic structures accompanying these registers may be absent in their speech and writing.

Despite the geographical proximity, Midbrae and Hill Heights are miles apart in the ways their Korean-American communities use literacy. Other studies have demonstrated that uses of literacy vary dramatically across linguistic groups; our study provides evidence that such uses also vary considerably within such groups. In addition, it suggests the critical importance that factors related to language contact play in shaping language use.

The differences identified here are significant and cannot be viewed as simply nominal differences that exist in two areas. Such findings suggest that the specific set of variables that differentiate the literacy practices of two groups of Korean Americans who have different types of contact with native English speakers may also affect the literacy practices of other ethnic groups with diverse access to native English speakers. For instance, it is possible that Vietnamese Americans who interact primarily with other immigrants use literacy very differently than their counterparts who interact primarily with native English speakers. This is not to say that these two groups of Vietnamese, one from an ethnically integrated area and the other from an ethnic enclave, do not use literacy in similar ways. Rather, before we make generalizations pertaining to the use of literacy by specific ethnic groups, we need to consider the nature of their contacts with native English speakers. The choice of the particular speech community in which a study is conducted will result in significant differences in terms of the variables examined and the types of conclusions drawn. The implications of this choice will have serious consequences for creating effective literacy programs and for designing effective theories of literacy development, maintenance, and loss.

In terms of literacy programs, in contexts in which Korean Americans are integrated into a community, there is a danger that, in learning English, the dominant language of the United States, they might lose their Korean literacy practices. However, in contexts in which Korean Americans live in isolated, ethnic enclaves, there is still a danger that the loss of Korean literacy practices will occur. However, for this group, there is an additional danger: Native-like English literacy skills may never be acquired.

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NOTES

1. The names of these cities have been changed to keep anonymous the Korean Americans discussed in this paper.
2. For instance, a Korean American may marry a monolingual English speaker, get a divorce, return to Korea to help a sick parent, then return to the United States. The individual's life circumstances and personality change, and these changes affect his or her literacy practices.
3. Sample size was selected in proportion to the number of Korean Americans in each city. According to U.S. census data, 5702 Korean Americans live in Midbrae, and 3660 Korean Americans live in Hill Heights.
4. Four of the Korean Americans were female and one was male. One was a graduate student at the University of California Irvine (UCI). Two were recent UCI graduates, and two were UCI seniors. All were born in South Korea, spoke fluent Korean and English, and lived in the vicinity of Midbrae and Hill Heights.
5. Although telephone interviews of this type may be culturally biased, our use of these interviews indicates that, when interviewed in Korean, Korean Americans respond to interview questions willingly, in ways that would be considered conventional from the perspective of native-English-speaking researchers.
6. For the complete analysis of the questionnaire data, including personal characteristics of the subjects, refer to Yoon & Scarcella (in press).
7. See Wilkinson (1989) for a discussion of the formula used for setting alpha levels when making multiple comparisons of dichotomous data.
8. The difference in the responses given by Midbrae and Hill Heights respondents was not statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 3.37$.
9. The overlap in the percentages of respondents who reported speaking Korean and English reflects the fact that many respondents speak both languages to their children.
10. Numbers of respondents vary because not all respondents kept the same types of reading materials in their homes.
11. Numbers of respondents vary somewhat, because not all respondents did the grocery shopping, went to the doctor's office, had young children attending preschool, attended college alumni clubs, or held full-time jobs.
12. They may use Korean when they do their grocery shopping in Midbrae, but such service encounters do not give them much opportunity to use Korean extensively.

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